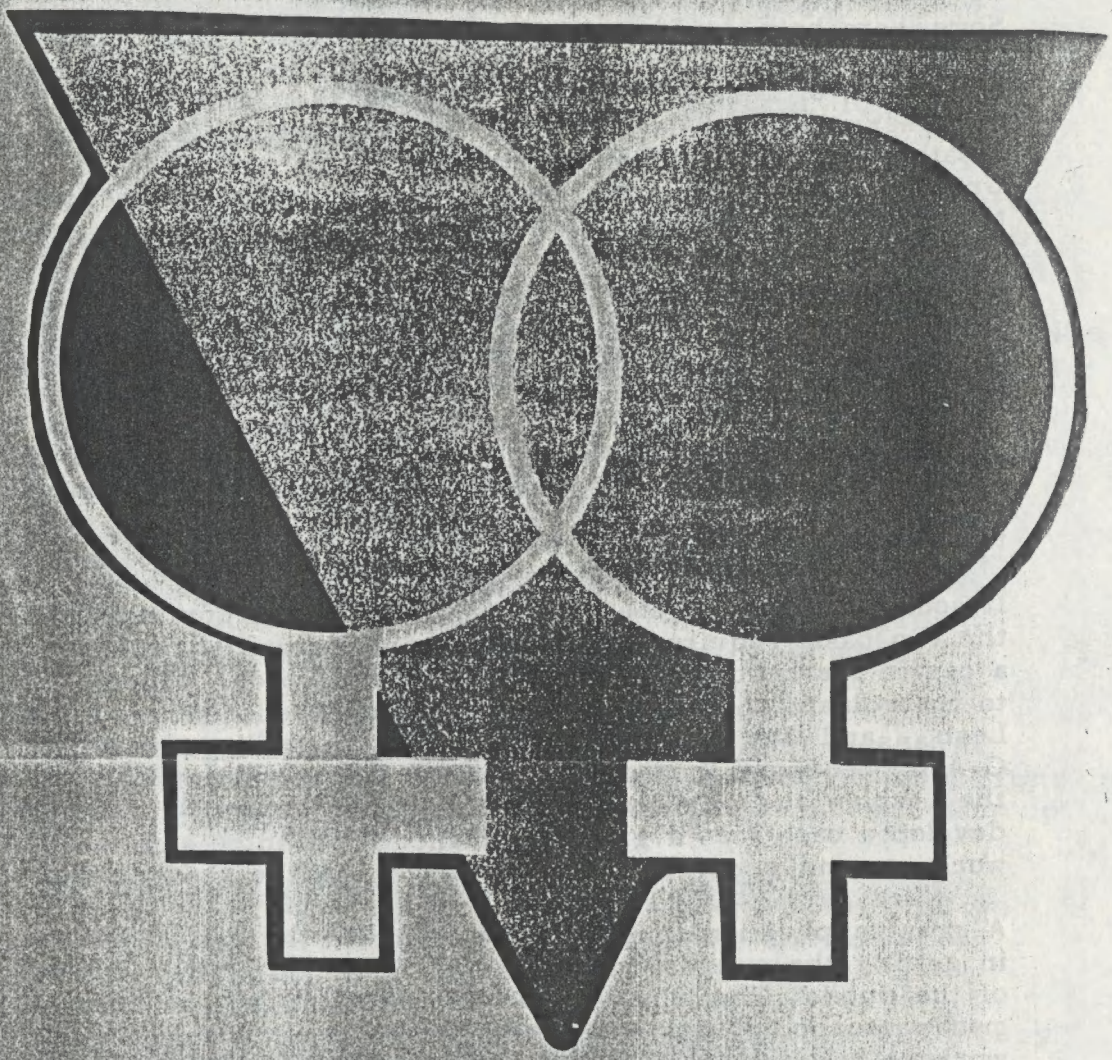
# GREENWICH LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS GROUP



# ANNUAL REPORT

june 85

# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Somewhere between 5% and 10% of the population of Greenwich are Lesbians and Gay men. The reason why an exact figure can't be given is the oppression of Lesbians and gay men and their inability to freely admit their sexuality and develop their interests as individuals, either socially or at work. There are no meeting places for Lesbians and gay men in Greenwich, and only one Gay pub. Many Lesbians and Gay men, especially the young and the unemployed cannot afford or do not want to use expensive and distant meeting places in London.

## HISTORY

In late 1983, the Community Affairs Committee organised a series of meetings for Lesbians and Gay men in Greenwich. The aim was to find out what this disadvantaged (and largely hidden) section of the community wanted from the Council as ratepayers, residents and workers, in line with the manifesto on which the Council was elected.

It soon became clear that a regular steering group was needed to achieve the two basic requirements of the people who attended the meetings - a centre for Lesbians and Gay men in the Borough and full-time workers to co-ordinate and support the campaigns needed to make sure that Greenwich's Lesbians and Gay men get a fair deal and equality of opportunity. The C.A.C. requested one of its Community Development Team to work with the Lesbian and Gay community to directly support the Steering Group, develop a case for a grant to finance the Centre and the development workers, and generally assist in getting the show on the road.

A grant application for £38,000 was put to the C.A.C. and was successful in getting the support of a wide cross-section of Councillors and members of the public. The jobs were advertised and two Lesbians and two Gay men were appointed to share the two posts as development and campaign workers.

**Now read on.....**

# GENERAL WORKERS' REPORT .....

This report covers the period from November '84 to June '85. David and Geoff have been in post since 13th November; Gill and Maggie since 21st January 1985.

Our funding is by Direct Grant from Greenwich Council's Community Affairs Committee. We are employed as Development Workers to develop a local lesbian and gay community, set up a Centre, to make links with existing organisations and to fight for lesbian and gay rights within the Borough.

It has been a period of setting up an office, firstly at the Volunteer Bureau (Woolwich), secondly at The Bell (Greenwich). We have also been finding our feet as a group of workers in a newly-created area.

To some extent we have been responding to events/initiatives, positive and negative, particularly the GLC Gay Working party's Draft Charter and the reaction of ACTSS/TGWU Joint Stewards Committee.

We have also been organising and running one-off and on-going meetings/social events: Women-only socials, Greenwich Festival and Lesbian and Gay Pride Events and so on.

In a climate which is still predominantly hostile to lesbians and gay men, we have been very busy working out strategies for long term change, challenging homophobia and developing a sense of local Community.

As a community based group we have also been aware that we exist within a social/societal context, hence our involvement in the fight against ratecapping, the Green Fair, anti-racism and the setting up of a British Sign Language course.

We are not uncritical of the work that we have done so far and we would welcome suggestions for where we go from here and helpful criticism of what we have covered in the report.

We would like to thank those who have worked with us in a voluntary capacity over the past months.

PREMISES

The search for permises began in December 1984.

We have so far tried to secure premises in Lakedale Road, Plumstead, Powis Street, Woolwich, The Macbean Centre, Woolwich. The first had already gone; the second had homophobic owners; the third was totally unsuitable in terms of accessibility and was not self-contained.

We are now hoping for self-contained premises in Flaxton Road, Plumstead. Dare we say that these look fairly hopeful!!

SOCIAL EVENTS

There have been regular group socials held at members' homes.

Women-only socials - see separate report.

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Older lesbians and gay men's evening: held at the Bell in April, this was organised in conjunction with Beckett Turner, and David Ware of Age Concern. This followed a meeting at which the needs of older lesbians and gay men was discussed with a view to enlightening Age Concern in their work.

Defend Gay's The Word Campaign Benefit night at The Dover Castle, Deptford in December. This raised £260 and around 300 people attended. Thanks to Eric and Phil for their help.

GREENWICH FESTIVAL

We organised nine nights of entertainment at The Bell. Some were very successful, others less so. The change of management a week before we started and the lack of late night licences didn't help. In particular, the collapse of the Women-only nights at the Bell was a major setback.

Artists appearing were: Impromptu, Ransome and Oppenheimer, Consenting Adults, Parker and Klein, Joanne Richler, barry Honeycombe, Strange Language, Frances Knight and Carol, Pink Singers, Halfway to Paradise.

On each evening we held a raffle and sold vegetarian food (thanks to Barry and Keith).

LESBIAN AND GAY PRIDE 1985

We organised two events at Woolwich Public Hall: one women-only, one mixed. These were very enjoyable but, sadly, poorly attended. These were listed in Capital Gay, Pride '85 Programme, City Limits and Time Out. Press releases were sent to the local press, but were ignored. The membership was mailed on two occasions and, if a little late in the day, posters were printed, along with flyers(which were left around various local venues as well as put in with Capital Gay on the local round).

Maybe we should have flyposted the area more and earlier. We also feel that we must accept that these were the first events for lesbians and gay men on this scale to happen in Woolwich and we are at a very early state in developing the community.

In conjunction with Goldsmith's Gaysoc we organised a Lesbian and Gay Day. This was opened by The Mayor of Lewisham, Councillor Margaret Sandra, who madea very positive speech. The day consisted of an exhibition from lesbian and gay groups, workshops, and ended with a disco and the Pink Singers.

The College Gaysoc hopes to organise another day in October.

On 23rd June there was an event, organised by Gill, in conjunction with LGYM, at Greenwich Young people's Theatre.

CAMPAIGNING/EDUCATION

Over this period we have had various dealings with the press. We have had articles/interviews about us and the project printed in Capital Gay and Greenwich Time. Smaller articles/newsitems have appeared in City Limits and Time Out. We have also kept a beady eye out for the usual homopobic articles in the national and local press, responding where necessary and getting printed rarely! Although Geoff managed to get printed in the SUN as a starred letter about fostering in Hackney.

DEPEND GAY'S THE WORD COMMITTEE

This group successfully applied to the Council for a grant of £500, which was added to the money raised at the Dover Castle. We also drafted a letter for the membership to be sent to their local MP's. We received replies from bottomley, Cartwright, barnett (favorable) and Silkin.

RATECAPPING/NALGO

During the period prior to setting a rate we took an active part through our involvement in voluntary sector Nalgo in the fight against ratecapping. We were present at sector and branch meetings and demonstrations. At the Annual Council Meeting we asked a question about discrimination at work of Vic Farlie, Chair of P.&I.R. who gave us a positive reply as to the Council's commitment to lesbian and gay rights.

A gay men in Greenwich Nalgo Group has been formed as a support and campaigning focus. We are currently looking at who will take the places now allocated for gay men on the Branch Executive.

ALBANY VIDEO

The Albany Video Project invited us to take part in a film that they were producing for Channel Four about the abolition of the GLC and it's effects on local groups. Although we had some criticisms about the length of time alloted to us, it was definitely a useful piece of education and publicity. We have a copy of the film if you want to see it. ("Beyond our Ken").

AIDS/CR GROUP

February and March saw some of the worst press scare-mongering and homophobia about AIDS. In order to combat the misinformation and prejudice we organised two meetings. The first was for the group itself at which we looked at what we knew about AIDS and it's influence on our lives. The meeting was very well attended and out of it came a consciousness-raising group which is now meeting regularly. The second meeting was a public meeting at the Clockhouse. Although we publicized the meeting widely no one from outside the lesbian and gay community attend. Nevertheless, it was informative and produced the idea of a group of us becoming 'expert' enough to take the issue to local doctors and clinics, rather than waiting for them to come to us.

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LIBRARY EXHIBITION

Geoff, maggie and a group of volunteers (Kythe, Mike and Alan) have spent considerable time over the last few months discussing and compiling a library exhibition. Their contacts with the local libraries have been very good and an exhibition on several boards describing the group, it's work and current lesbian and gay fiction and non-fiction, is now proudly standing in one of the local libraries. Over the period of the exhibition it will be staffed so that members of the public can ask questions.

We have also stocked the office with lesbian and gay books which are available on loan to anyone who wants to borrow them for a short period.

WORKSHOPS

As part of our commitment to all lesbians and gay men in the Borough we have been involved in three specific areas so far.

-Signing Course: For several weeks now ten of us have been studying with Mika Brojer, British Sign Language. The course will continue in September by which time we will be better equipped to communicate with people who have hearing difficulties.

-Disability Workshop: Every month the group has an open meeting where we deal with important business, and have a discussion. In the Spring we invited people from GEMMA and Brothers and Sisters to come and talk to us about being lesbian, gay and having a disability.

-Discussion around racism: At a similar open meeting Gill and Raman talked to us about race, racism and our responses to the whole area. Related to this discussion was a change in the format of the staffing group so that there will be places for people from Asian/Black and other racial/cultural backgrounds. As the project is still almost totally white we see race and our own actions as vital to the development of the project.

POLICE

David has met with Tony Norris, the Community Liason Officer for the local police to discuss the introduction of a scheme in which the telephone number of the Greenwich phoneline rather than cautioning or possible arrest. The Chief Inspectors in the area are interested and so further discussion will be taking place.
We also got information about the number of arrests for 'gross indecency' in the Borough.
From a meeting with the Police Sub-Committee Support Unit we got hold of a survey form to collate information about people's experiences with the police, and times when they could have called the police but chose not to. These have been circulated to the membership.

HOUSING: NON PRIORITY HOUSING - LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Around 32 homeless people have now been housed through this scheme. Many of them have been put in touch with the scheme through our office. Geoff and maggie talked to voluntary referral agencies involved in the scheme and officers in Lewisham Council.

Greenwich Housing Committee's decisions have been sent to Lewisham for consideration.
Recently we have become involved in the South East London campaign, initiated by Stopover, around the new Bed and Breakfast regulations.
All this work around housing is preparing us to propose a scheme for Greenwich based on all the information gathered from the Lewisham scheme.

ACTSS/TGWU CAMPAIGN

In march we heard of the decision of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee of ACTSS/TGWU to 'actively oppose' the implementation of any part of the GLC Draft Charter for Lesbians and Gay Men which the Community Affairs Committee had put on the agendas of relevant committees.
They also called for the cessation of our funding, so effectively caling for our redundancies.
In short, we mounted a campaign which has involved pickets of their branch meetings. Greenwich motions passed at Branch Meetings of Nalgo. We have written countless letters and produced a model letter and motion which we have widely distributed.
Support has come in the form of motions being passed in ACTSS branches (Southwark, Hackney, Legal Workers and East London Co-ops) condemning the Greenwich branch and especially Mr. C. Maslin for his outspokenly prejudiced remarks to the local press. Articles have appeared in Capital Gay and City Limits, who have both kept up with the situation.
At the moment we are waiting to hear the result of a motion condemning Greenwich ACTSS/TGWU which is being put to the South-East Regional Committee of ACTSS. The region covers London and South-East England.
There is also a petition circulating within the Council which has been set up by Council workers, condemning their actions and calling for disciplinary action.
Another letter, to John Austin-Walker, received 1/7/85 from Manchester City Council, also condemned the ACTTSS/TGWU attitude.

DRAFT CHARTER FOR LESBIAN AND GAY MEN (GLC)

The relevant sections of the Charter have been put on the agendas of the appropriate Council committees by the Community Affairs Committee, and we were called on to speak at these meetings. Here is a list of the committees and their responses so far:

P.&I.R.: indefinitely deferred, although with the change of Chair things may start to happen.

E.&I. : deferred for study by councillors from Employment & Industry Committee.

Women's Sub-com: deferred, though there was alot of positive support and proper discussion. unfortunately an interim meeting was very poorly attended.

D.L.O. : the Charter was not seen as applicable, as the Chair assured us that there were no lesbians or gay men in the Direct labour organisation.

Social Services : the item was rushed through and noted. We were informed that the department was producing it's own report on 'Human Relations'. Having defensively told us that 'this issue' needed the widest public consultation, we have still not been consulted on their document.
David though has met with members of the department and had a very sucessful informal meeting.

POLICE : the Committee agreed the proposal that we should meet with the support Sub-Committee to discuss the whole situation.
This meeting has taken place and one of the outcomes is the survey.

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HEALTH : after a long and heated debate the meeting agreed that we should meet with the Health Adviser to the Council and draw up a document.

EDUCATION: it was agreed that the department would look into including the 'richness and diversity of lesbian and gay experience and culture' throughout the school curriculum.
Their decision was greeted with horror by the local (K.I.) and national press. (Daily Express).

HOUSING : The Housing Committee agreed the entire section on Housing in the Charter;

STOP PRESS

NEWSLETTER The newsletter was discussed at the last Open Meeting. It was decided to try to make it more interesting format. A group of volunteers will be putting the next issue together on 24th July in the Resource Centre.

GREEN FAIR We had a stall at both days of the Green Fair in New Cross. Following Geoff's attendance at one of their orgainsing meetings we made sure that we were included on the posters and programme.
Geoff and kate held a workshop on 'Invisibility' which was not well-attended. This was brought to everyone's notice by them making several announcements over various microphones. Quite a few people came up and spoke to us after these, at the stall.

LESBIAN & GAY PRIDE DAY: We were a good-sized contingent, with banner, on the day. We also ran a stall at Jubilee gardens which was busy most of the time. Some new local people were contacted which was very pleasing.

ABBEY WOOD SCHOOL: Maggie and Geoff had a successful meeting with Ghulam Sarawari, community Education Worker for the school. Also present were workers from the Volunteer Bureau and a rep. from Abbey Wood Teants and Residents Association. It is good to have made contact with the school - we hope to be having a lot of future contact.

## FUTURE PROGRAMME

### SOCIALS

Maggie and Gill have already set a regular social women only at the Clockhouse.
Geoff and David want to set a regular monthly date at the Clockhouse which will be widely and persistently publicised. At these we will hope to have films on video? and maybe live singers and acts. The idea is for a regular event which will not involve a lot of organisation but in it's regularly will hopefully slowly draw new people.

### PREMISES

Our latest information is that no one else is interested in the premises on Flaxton Road. If everything goes well we could be moving in in the near future. The premises will act as office and small social space in the right end of the borough.

### FRESHERS WEEK

During the first weeks of the autumn term at Thames Poly (and possibly Goldsmiths) we would like to help the Lesbian and Gaysocs in mounting a display and putting on an event for the new students.

### AIDS GROUP

A small group of interested people will be forming to gather the necessary information so that it can go round doctor's surgeries, local health clinics and V.D. clinics to discuss AIDS.

### CHARTER

With the establishment of the Council's own group to look at a Charter for Greenwich we will obviously be involved in the drawing up of such a document.

### LIBRARIES EXHIBITION

The Mayor of Lewisham, Margaret Sandra has suggested that with her help we may be able to get this exhibition displayed borough-wide in the libraries of Lewisham.

# LESBIAN WORKERS' REPORT.....

Maggie Honey and Gill King, the Lesbian workers have been in post since January 1985. At this time the office in Woolwich, the Volunteer Bureau was in the process of being moved to a larger space above the Bell Pub in Greenwich, where we have been based ever since.

This report therefore covers the period January 1985 to present time. I will not go over items already mentioned in the general / mixed workers report but will concentrate on work specifically geared to the Lesbian Community in Greenwich.

As well as dealing with the mixed events, issues and campaigns already outlined in the other report, we felt it important to work on separate issues for Lesbians within the group. One of the main areas of concern being the lack of a space and/or social event for Lesbians and women in the Borough, also the lack of a feeling of community or net work for Lesbians in the locality.

WOMEN ONLY SOCIALS/EVENTS

THE BELL: (DISCO)

We ran a women's night at the Bell Pub in Greenwich from 6th March 1985 until the 29th May 1985 which was highly successful but not popular with either the local straight community or the owner of the pub. We finally had to close because we were contravening the Equal Opportunities Legislation and discriminating against men!

THE CLOCKHOUSE: (DISCO/SOCIAL

Women's Night Out is starting from Tuesday 2nd July again. Publicity has gone out for this regular weekly event and we are hoping it will attract the same numbers 50-70 women that the other venue did.

LESBIAN STRENGTH: (24th June '85

The event sadly did not the get the support the event deserved for so much work put into it. Those there, however, had a very enjoyable evening. There were two films and a Live Band; Ginger and Spice. Also Disco food and creche were provided.

GREENWICH FESTIVAL:

Effort was made to attract Lesbians to the events by putting on women's acts, but the attitude generally in the pub towards Lesbians is not very conducive - particularly in light of hostities on both sides around the closure of the very well attended and successful 'women only' night. Many women have since boycotted the Bell and are again without a space of their own.

WOMENS SOCIAL:

We put on two Socials, one with video screening and as this proved not to be very successful at the Clockhouse on Sundays we decided to concentrate in future more on developing the Nightout at the Centre (see Tuesdays "women's Night Out") starting in July.

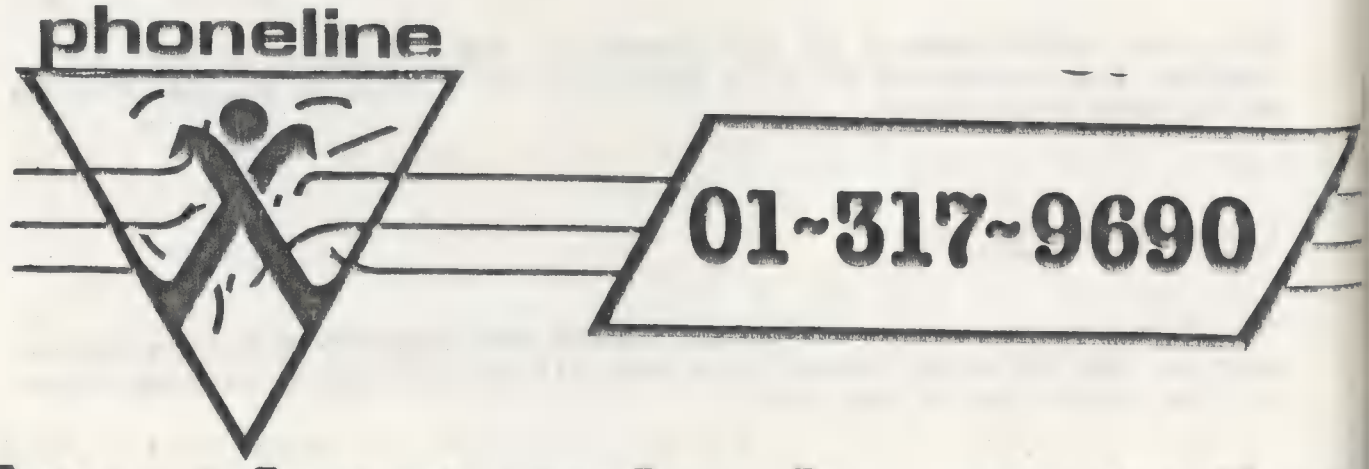
# lesbian & gay youth movement

LGYM STARTS GROUP IN GREENWICH

We're an organisation of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual young people under the age of 26. LGYM is a political group, working for youth as well as Lesbian and Gay liberation. We give advice and support to young Gays and Lesbians and also support self-run Lesbian and and Gay youth groups. We organise a Spring Festival and a Summer holiday each year and produce "LESBIAN AND GAY YOUTH MAGAZINE" - which is written and produced by members and distributed through alternative bookshops and demos, as well as free to our members and affiliates. Our penfriends scheme costs £1. It is not a dating agency in any way, but simply an opportunity for isolated young Lesbian and Gay people to stop feeling lonely.

Now we have a local group in Greenwich. For information contact: Jeff or Gill C/O the GLGRG or on the PHONELINE.

THE PHONELINE IS NOW OPEN. The number is 317 9690, and there is a Lesbian and a Gay man by the phone on WEDNESDAYS and FRIDAYS - 6.00pm to 9.00pm, and SATURDAYS 3.00pm to 6.00pm. At other times there is an answerphone. We're planning to open five days a week, watch out for more news!

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PUBLICITY

We as Lesbians Workers have been producing a separate newsletter, alongside the mixed one,which goes out only to women on the mailing list,as well as publicity for women only events.

Maggie was also involved in the video "Beyond Our Ken" and putting together information and publicity for the Library Exhibition, Green Fair,Goldsmiths Event and stall at the 'pride '85'Carnival.

There have also been articles on the Lesbian input in the project in Greenwich Time, Capital Gay and various other papers and lot of publicity about the Women's Night closure, "Ding Dong at the Bell", in the Local Press and Capital Gay.

OUTREACH

Maggie has been involved in DYFAH (Non Priority, Homeless Housing) in Lewisham alongside Geoff. Hoping to learn from the experience and set up a similar scheme in Greenwich. (I have got to know an awful lot of women locally in the process-Maggie)
Contacts have been made with various groups and individual Lesbians in the Borough and links established with groups such as the Abused Womens Group, Gripp (Single Parents) and Pensioners Link. Also links with Centres - the Clockhouse in particular and Council departments i.e. Greenwich Entertainments - who were very helpful in supporting us doing social events.

We have also been very active in the Women's Sub-Committee, with particular reference to the Lesbian and Gay Charter and its implicatio for Lesbians and other women-only organisations locally. (Womens Group at the Volunteer Bureau). Links have also been established with Youth Projects and a Young Lesbian and Gays Day was organised by Gill for Greenwich Festival at the Greenwich Young People's Theatre.

TRAINING

I am attending the signing course for deaf awareness and have also involved a Lesbian from another project to attend . (Maggie)

PREMISES

Due to continuing problems at the Bell, especially, for Lesbians we decided not to expand out space there and take over other rooms but to look elsewhere for a new office. Suitable property has been found in Flaxton Road and we are pursuing this. Due to its inaccesability there are thoughts of maybe providing safe transport in the future and holding late night events (of a larger scale) elsewhere in the Borough -where space and access are better.

Working In A Mixed Project

A lot of the workload had been relevant for both Lesbians and Gay men so a lot of shared work has gone on in respect of ACTTS/TGWU, Council Committees, work on the Lesbians and Gay Charter, social events. At t Bell, and publicity for all the events we have taken part in and parti cipated in.

At times it is hard to keep ones head above water with both mixed and separate issues and work to deal with. But Lesbian involvement is vital when talking of 'Gay' Rights and Lesbians tend to be forgotten or leftout if Lesbians are not there pointing the way. There are problems in working together with Gay men but the benefits on the whole far outweigh them. In Unity there is strength but there is of course also a need for women to develop separately around specific Lesbian issues and women-only space and activities.

FUTURE PLANS

There is still a noticeable absence of black Lesbians and Gays involved in the Project and this needs to examined and worked on by both workers and management group. Maggie hopes to attend a rascism awareness course in July /August in the Borough.

To develop the womens night from purely a Social/Disco to include may-be film/discussion groups as well and occasionally put on live events on a small scale. With the women coming together on this night to build up the sense of a community and what is wants.

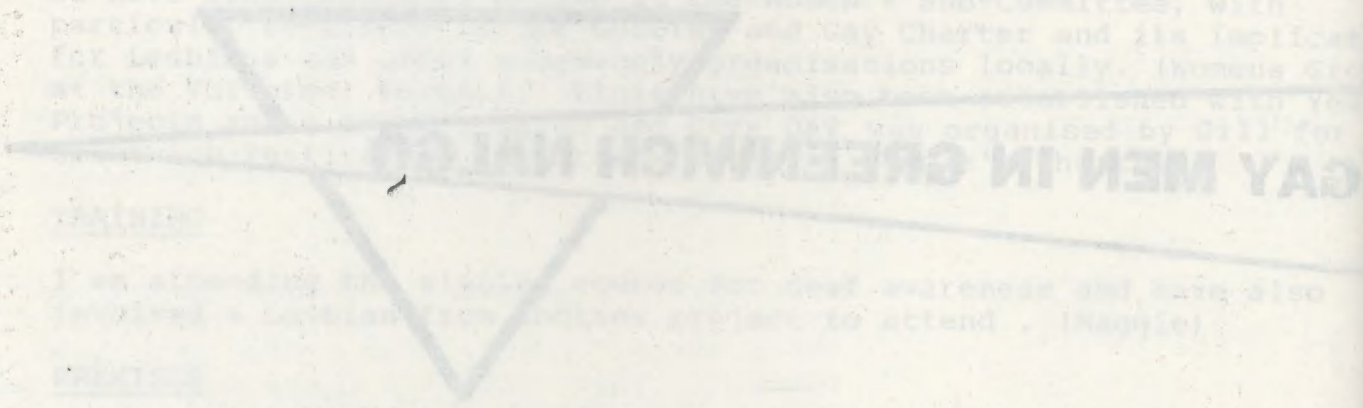
To get more involved in womens groups in the Borough and especially with Women in Projects such as SIMBA, Asian Womens Group and Asian Resource Centre.

# GAY MEN IN GREENWICH NALGO

The GAY MEN IN GREENWICH NALGO group was set up with the support of the GLGRG's male workers. It aims to:educate and inform the local Nalgo membership on Gay Rights and related issues; monitor Council policy and practice, and initiate change where appropriate; support individual Gay men who are in conflict with either management or the union because of their sexuality; and liaise with Lesbians in the local Nalgo Branch, and with the National Nalgo Lesbian and Gay Steering Group.

As the Greenwich Branch has decided to allocate 2 seats on its Branch Executive to representatives of Gay men (as well as 2 seats for Lesbians) the group also provides a base and a forum for these reps - one of whom is at present a GLGRG worker.

For more info contact Geoff Hardy on 853 5206 or Paddy Hughes on 854 8888 ext 2055.



# GREENWICH LESBIAN & GAY RIGHTS GROUP

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS. 1.4.84. to 31.3.85

## Income

| | |
|---|---|
| L.B.Greenwich "Starter" Grant | 50.00 |
| L.B.Greenwich Main Grant | 12,760.00 |
| Repayment of Staff advances | 120.25 |
| TOTAL INCOME: | £12,930.25 |

## Expenditure

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Office Equipment/ Furniture | 2076.02 | |
| Admin. & Staff Expenses | 429.10 | |
| Publicity & Adverts | 119.60 | |
| Rent & Rates | 705.00 | |
| Insurance | 100.00 | |
| Workers' Bonus & Advances | 472.51 | |
| Childcare Expenses | 27.00 | |
| Donations | 60.00 | |
| Petty Cash in hand | 25.76 | |
| Bank Charges | 10.00 | |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE: | | £4,024.99 |
| Credit in Bank Account, 3.4.85 | 9778.06 | |
| Less Outstanding Creditors, 3.4.85 | 872.80 | |
| BALANCE TO CARRY FORWARD : | | £8,905.26 |
| | | £12,930.25 |

☆ NOTE FROM TREASURER

The large amount of money carried forward reflects to some extent the delay in getting workers into post and activities off the ground, but in the main it is the result of our inability, for various reasons - see workers' reports - to establish a bricks and mortar Centre. Much of the surplus is, therefore, earmarked for rent & rates, necessary conversion work (disabled access etc.), and decoration of a Centre when we have one, plus other one-off capital expenditure to resource the Centre in the next financial year.

Treasurer: P Hughes 28.VI.85

# LESBIAN & GAY LINE
## Greenwich

Want to chat ?

Information ?

Advice ?

7–10pm

**LESBIAN**
Thursdays

**GAY**
Tuesdays

**01-853-4199**

# GREENWICH LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS GROUP

Workers: Margaret Honey
Gill King
Geoff Hardy
David Simpson

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